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ABSTRACT

This document consists of a packet of materials published in December 1990 and designed to assist citizens in forming study circles to discuss the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The resources are designed to be nonpartisan, fair, and balanced, and try to make the strongest possible case for four different options, reflecting a broad range of viewpoints on the crisis in the Gulf. The materials included are: an introductory letter; notes to organizers: a framework for discussion; the options; perspectives on the options; suggestions for participants; suggestions for leading a study circle in general; and suggestions for leading "Crisis in the Gulf" in particular. (DB)

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CRISIS IN THE GULF

A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

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A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

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A Project of:

The Study Circles Resource Center of Topsfield Foundation
in cooperation with
The Choices Education Project of
the Center for Foreign Policy Development
at Brown University

STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

December 1990

"At the end of the day, the American people are going to have to decide. No President can pursue a policy for very long without the support and understanding of the Congress and the American people. That's been demonstrated over and over again."

-- Dean Rusk

The Gulf crisis calls for the judgment of all American citizens. No policy of the United States will succeed without our understanding and support.

Now is the time for all citizens to engage in public conversation about what the United States policy in the Persian Gulf should be. We need to consider all viewpoints, listen to those who may differ from us, consider the consequences of all positions, and make hard choices about the direction in which we want to see our country moving.

There are no easy answers, but together citizens can inform themselves and decide on basic directions. Such conversations need to be public conversations. Each of us needs to know what our neighbors are thinking and why they believe as they do. And your neighbors need to know what you are thinking and why you believe as you do.

We invite you to meet with your friends, neighbors, peers and associates in small informal study circles to decide what the policy of the United States should be in dealing with the crisis in the Gulf.

The public is responsible for establishing purposes and setting direction for our country. This responsibility cannot be delegated.

Route 169 P.O. Box 203 Pomfret, Connecticut 06258

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Notes to Organizers

The enclosed packet of materials is provided to assist you in the discussion of the crisis in the Persian Gulf. This material is non-partisan, fair, and balanced. We have tried to make the strongest possible case for four different options which reflect a broad range of viewpoints on the crisis in the Gulf. Please feel free to copy and distribute this material in any way that you feel is appropriate. The Study Circles Resource Center's primary goal is to promote public conversations on critical social and political issues. We encourage you to share this material with anyone else who might have an interest in organizing discussions on this issue. If you need further advice on discussing this issue, or on study circles in general, please contact Betsy Stubbs at the Study Circles Resource Center at (203) 928-2616.

A study circle is a highly participatory discussion in which a leader assists participants in wrestling with a social or political issue. This study circle is designed to take approximately two hours.

To actually make a study circle happen, you will need to recruit between 5 and 20 participants, decide on a time and place for the meeting, select a leader, photocopy the materials (participants will need copies of items marked with an asterisk in the Table of Contents) and mail them to the participants. If you feel that there is not enough time to mail information to participants prior to meeting, the components that should be handed out during the meeting include the "Framework for Discussion," "The Options," and the "Suggestions for Participants."

Also included in this packet is a general guide for the leader of the study circle and specific suggestions for discussion of this issue, including recommended questions to keep the discussion lively and focused.

You may find it helpful to contact the local library for very recent articles on the crisis or to obtain the addresses of your group's congressional representatives. For a guide to sources of information on the Persian Gulf crisis contact ACCESS, 1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 605, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 785-6630.

We hope that this material will be helpful in making a study circle happen in your community. We would like to know of your success and share it with others. Please complete and return the "Follow-up Form" on the back cover of this packet to let us know about what happened in your community. If the returns are high enough, we will share the results with respondents. By completing this form you will also be letting us know that you would like similar packets on future issues.

CRISIS IN THE GULF

A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

The Options

Option 1 – We should take military action in the near future both to expel Iraq from Kuwait and to destroy Iraq's military machine. With or without possession of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein will continue to pursue a reckless policy of expansion and will not hesitate to use any weapon he can get his hands on, possibly including nuclear weapons. His military power is an important regional threat, especially to our close ally Israel. Nothing besides military action will remove this threat. The U.S. has the unique capability and responsibility to take the lead in this mission. This will mean sending large numbers of ground troops into Iraq. The cost in American lives would be very high, but the future cost of allowing Saddam Hussein to retain dominance in the Gulf region and influence over the world oil supply would be infinitely higher.

Option 2 – We should take military action in the near future, but only to force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait if it has not retreated by January 15. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait violates the fundamental principle of territorial sovereignty. This must be redressed swiftly, since Saddam has shown that he will respond only to force. Both weather conditions and troop morale argue for the earliest possible action. Also, it is not in our interest to allow his unyielding occupation of Kuwait indefinitely while we suffer the human and economic costs of a major troop commitment. This clearly defined and limited military action has been authorized by the international community through the U.N. Security Council. The U.S. should play a leading role because of its unique capabilities and responsibilities. Even this mission would cost many American lives (though not as many as in Option 1), but it could set the stage for a stable world order in the years to come.

Option 3 – We should now scale down the confrontation and encourage the Arabs to negotiate a settlement, thereby avoiding a costly war. Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we have successfully accomplished our goals. We have protected Saudi Arabia and guaranteed oil supplies. Saddam Hussein has been checked. Since it is the Arab states that have to live with the results of any settlement, the U.S. should encourage them to take the leadership (and the U.S. could support their efforts) in finding a solution to the crisis. There will have to be give and take on both sides in order to find a face-saving way to end the conflict. For example, a deal could be made whereby Kuwait grants Iraq increased access to the Gulf as part of the settlement. Such a deal would lead to the withdrawal of a large proportion of U.S. troops (possibly all). The protracted use of American troops could be held against us in the long run. Furthermore, we have plenty of things to spend money on at home.

Option 4 – We should give the sanctions time to work while encouraging the United Nations to resolve the crisis. The economic embargo imposed by the U.N. Security Council is a rare example of global cooperation. The U.S. should build on that momentum of collective action by pulling troops back to defensive levels and stopping the talk about offensive action. This is a turning point in history, presenting us with a chance to promote a new world order in which international organizations play a major role in conflict resolution. In playing the role it was designed for, the United Nations should take the lead in finding other solutions in addition to sanctions. These solutions might include exploring the ideas of a U.N. protectorate throughout Kuwait, peacekeeping troops in Kuwait, and World Court adjudication of Kuwait-Iraq territorial boundaries. If sanctions and other collective efforts fail to work, any military action should be carried out under U.N. command by forces that are truly multinational in character.

A Framework for Discussion

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on August 2, 1990 began the first global crisis of the post-Cold War era. The international community responded swiftly: the U.N. Security Council enacted mandatory trade and financial sanctions against Iraq in August. The U.S. first sent troops to Saudi Arabia during the week after the invasion. As of this writing (early December), American forces in the Gulf region already exceed a quarter of a million and are being built up toward the half-million mark. The United Nations Security Council has authorized the use of force to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait if it hasn't already done so by January 15.

There is considerable disagreement about what our goals are or should be in the Gulf crisis. Should we be there only to achieve Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait? To remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq? To ensure the flow of oil from the region? Or to work toward a new world order? Should we be there at all? We as a nation have hard choices ahead of us, ones that need the judgments that come from public conversations.

The four options presented as a framework for this discussion are intended to help you think about what direction U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf should take. The immediate policy decision will be whether or not to use force, and for that reason the issue is often put into a yes-or-no framework. The options presented here go beyond this to consider a *range* of policy directions we could pursue.

These options are distinct from each other in important ways. We offer them as guides for discussion. They are not the only alternatives; as you review the options, don't feel constrained by them. Feel comfortable "trying them on" with others in your group. You will find that each has risks and tradeoffs. Think about your own concerns and goals, and listen to the views of others. Then come to your own considered judgment on this issue, a judgment which may or may not be one of our options. Finally, we hope you will let your U. S. Senators and U.S. Representative know what you think on this important issue.

Perspectives on the Options

Option 1 – We should take military action in the near future both to expel Iraq from Kuwait and to destroy Iraq's military machine.

With or without possession of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein will continue to pursue a reckless policy of expansion and will not hesitate to use any weapon he can get his hands on, possibly including nuclear weapons. His military power is an important regional threat, especially to our close ally Israel. Nothing besides military action will remove this threat. The U.S. has the unique capability and responsibility to take the lead in this mission. This will mean sending large numbers of ground troops into Iraq. The cost in American lives would be very high, but the future cost of allowing Saddam Hussein to retain dominance in the Gulf region and influence over the world oil supply would be infinitely higher.

Goals

- Demonstrate that aggression will be punished
- Secure oil flow from region at a reasonable price
- Gain long-term security of moderate Arab states
- Gain long-term security of Israel
- Eliminate Iraq's chemical weapons capability and nuclear program

Underlying beliefs

- If Iraq emerges from this crisis with its military intact, it will become a regional superpower, able to threaten Israel and coerce OPEC policy.
- If Saddam Hussein is allowed to withdraw from Kuwait without paying a military price for his aggression, he will be politically strengthened within the Arab world. Then he will represent an even greater threat to the region.
- There is little chance for a future peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians as long as Israel has to worry about a hostile and militarily strong Iraq.

Criticisms

- Too costly in American lives (estimates range from 30,000 to 40,000 casualties)
- Not worth fighting over the price of oil, the real issue for the U.S.
- Iraq will be weak after this because of sanctions anyway, so no need to attack
- Conflict may widen, and would be difficult to control
- Force is not the solution to the global problem of nuclear and chemical weapons proliferation

Option 2 - We should take military action in the near future, but only to force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait if it has not retreated by January 15.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait violates the fundamental principle of territorial sovereignty. This must be redressed swiftly, since Saddam has shown that he will respond only to force. Both weather conditions and troop morale argue for the earliest possible action. Also, it is not in our interest to allow his unyielding occupation of Kuwait indefinitely while we suffer the human and economic costs of a major troop commitment. This clearly defined and limited military action has been authorized by the international community through the U.N. Security Council. The U.S. should play a leading role because of its unique capabilities and responsibilities. Even this mission would cost many American lives (though not as many as in Option 1), but it could set the stage for a stable world order in the years to come.

Goals

- Demonstrate that aggression does not pay
- Return Kuwait to the Kuwaitis
- Obtain the release of the hostages
- Secure oil flow from region at a reasonable price

Underlying beliefs

- The U.S. has an obligation to take a leadership role in redressing aggression.
- The U.S. has an obligation to protect vital resources for the world market.
- Economic sanctions against Iraq will take too long to force it from Kuwait.
- If we wait to take military action, the fragile coalition we have built may weaken.
- Waiting too long to take military action may promote domestic instability within the moderate Arab states.

Criticisms

- Too costly in American lives
- Limited wars in turbulent regions rarely remain limited
- Not worth fighting over the price of oil, the real issue for the U.S.
- Not necessary, because sanctions will work given more time
- Iraq will still be a military threat to the region, and we would only have to deal with this later
- Doesn't punish Iraq for its aggression
- Troops will retain fighting edge in spite of waiting

Option 3 – We should now scale down the confrontation and encourage the Arabs to negotiate a settlement, thereby avoiding a costly war.

Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we have successfully accomplished our goals. We have protected Saudi Arabia and guaranteed oil supplies. Saddam Hussein has been checked. Since it is the Arab states that have to live with the results of any settlement, the U.S. should encourage them to take the leadership (and the U.S. could support their efforts) in finding a solution to the crisis. There will have to be give and take on both sides in order to find a face-saving way to end the conflict. For example, a deal could be made whereby Kuwait grants Iraq increased access to the Gulf as part of the settlement. Such a deal would lead to the withdrawal of a large proportion of U.S. troops (possibly all). The protracted use of American troops could be held against us in the long run. Furthermore, we have plenty of things to spend money on at home.

Goals

- Prevent a costly and counter-productive war
- Secure oil flow from region at a reasonable price
- Obtain a realistic, long-term regional security arrangement
- Secure American influence in the region by assisting in a regional solution rather than fighting a war against Arabs
- Set a precedent for negotiating seemingly intractable conflicts (for example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict)

Underlying beliefs

- It is possible to negotiate a settlement that contains compromise on interests but not on essential principles.
- Successful negotiation of this crisis would enhance the likelihood that diplomatic solutions would be sought in this post-Cold War era.
- Though negotiations would be very difficult, war would only complicate any attempts at regional talks in future generations.
- It is not necessary or desirable for the U.S. to get bogged down in an expensive new "Cold War" in the Middle East.

Criticisms

- Negotiation is the same as giving in
- Doesn't properly redress the original aggression
- Fruitless to negotiate with someone as ruthless as Saddam Hussein
- Arab allies are not powerful enough to negotiate without strong U.S. presence
- Arab states might not come up with a solution that protects U.S. interests
- Politically embarrassing for U.S. to pull back
- If Arabs don't come to a solution, we'll be in a bind: should we rebuild our forces in the area or continue to pull back?

Option 4 – We should give the sanctions time to work while encouraging the United Nations to resolve the crisis.

The economic embargo imposed by the U.N. Security Council is a rare example of global cooperation. The U.S. should build on that momentum of collective action by pulling troops back to defensive levels and stopping the talk about offensive action. This is a turning point in history, presenting us with a chance to promote a new world order in which international organizations play a major role in conflict resolution. In playing the role it was designed for, the United Nations should take the lead in finding other solutions in addition to sanctions. These solutions might include exploring the ideas of a U.N. protectorate throughout Kuwait, peacekeeping troops in Kuwait, and World Court adjudication of Kuwait-Iraq territorial boundaries. If sanctions and other collective efforts fail to work, any military action should be carried out under U.N. command by forces that are truly multinational in character.

Goals

- Prevent a costly and counter-productive war
- Secure the flow of oil from the region at a reasonable price
- Demonstrate that the international community will not tolerate aggression
- Strengthen the international community's ability to resolve crises

Underlying beliefs

- The world order is changing. With East and West no longer in standoff, it is possible for the U.N. to assume its intended peacekeeping and conflict resolution roles.
- Most of the cost of sanctions has already been paid and the international system is able to bear it even if they are continued indefinitely. In comparison, the cost of war would be high in terms of lives, money spent, and unpredictability of oil supply.
- Sanctions can work given enough patience and sufficient global solidarity.
- Other nations besides the U.S. stand to gain from forcing Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait (whether by sanctions or by military force) so it is time that we shared the burden.

Criticisms

- Sanctions will not work
- Sanctions will take too long to work
- The U.N. is not strong enough to enforce a solution
- The U.N. might not come up with a solution that protects American interests
- Sanctions are too economically and politically costly for our allies in the region (particularly bordering states)
- Possible weakening or collapse of U.S.-Arab coalition before sanctions achieve goal

CRISIS IN THE GULF

A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

Suggestions for Participants

The goal of a study circle is not to learn a lot of facts, or to attain group consensus, but rather to deepen each person's understanding of the issue. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process – democratic discussion among equals – is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group.

• **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you; they have reasons for their beliefs. You should be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with. This level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for whatever position you come to.

• **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how your points are related to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

• **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

• **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

• **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

• **Value your own experience and opinions.** Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

• **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate, but don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.

Study Circles Resource Center
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CRISIS IN THE GULF

A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

Leading a Study Circle

The study circle leader is the most important person in determining its success or failure. It is the leader's responsibility to moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert. However, thorough familiarity with the reading material and previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go will make the leader more effective and more comfortable in this important role.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay. A background of leading small group discussions or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

• **"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.** Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. A quick review of the suggestions for participants will help ensure that everyone understands the ground rules for the discussion.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• **Don't allow the group to get hung up on unprovable "facts" or assertions.** Disagreements about basic facts are common for controversial issues. If there is debate over a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep discussion focused on the point at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel safe say-

ing what they really think – even if it's unpopular.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of final arbiter. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Questions or comments that are directed at the leader can often be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" will encourage discussion rather than elicit short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split; there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Close the session with a brief question that each participant may respond to in turn.** This will help them review their progress in the meeting and give a sense of closure.

Suggestions for Leading CRISIS IN THE GULF

All discussion groups are different. The participants and the world events of the moment make this so. The following observations are intended not to be definitive, but to offer suggestions from leaders who have experienced discussion groups on this topic. Since the very object of such discussions is to learn from each other, the leader must accept the risks and rewards that come from the spontaneity and insights of individuals. The leader's job, then, is to strike a balance between spontaneity and focus.

This study circle is designed to take approximately two hours. To open the discussion you might ask people to talk about their thoughts back in August following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and our decision to send troops. You want people to start talking, but to hold off on staking out positions. Such a question also shows how we need to be sensitive to change (since many people have changed their minds). This question could well take a full half-hour. Following that, you might pose such questions as where people think the rest of the world is on this issue and why, or why the U.S. has pursue the policy it has. Again, this keeps the group thinking about the issue before staking out positions.

The latter half of this discussion could then focus on the options outlined in the enclosed material. Give the participants a few minutes to review the "Framework for Discussion" and "The Options." Encourage discussion of the options presented. Then the participants can speak to the option(s) closest to their thinking and explain their viewpoints. The leader should help the group consider unpopular options. Keep in mind (and remind the group if you must) that a lot of thinking, sincere Americans have opted for *each* position.

Consensus need not be a goal of the discussion, and in fact may be an unsuitable goal. You might close the discussion by asking what advice participants would give if they had a moment or two with President Bush and his advisors, and then invite each participant to answer in turn.

All participants should be encouraged to inform their congressional delegation of their stand on this issue, whatever it may be. More homogeneous groups may want to meet again to discuss group action.

Finally, enjoy yourself! Although the subject is serious, the process will be more beneficial for everyone if they are able to share concerns in a relaxed atmosphere.

CRISIS IN THE GULF

A STUDY CIRCLE ON AMERICA'S CHOICES

Follow-up Form

Please take a few moments to report on your study circle.

Date of meeting:
Location (city and state):
Sponsoring organization:
Number of persons in attendance:

Was your study circle a useful process for working through this issue?
yes ___ no ___
Comments:

Were participants able to "try on" ideas and perspectives they had not considered before? yes ___ no ___
Comments:

Was there movement toward individual or group action? yes ___ no ___
If so, what action was taken?

Other comments:

Your name and address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Please fold, staple, and return to the address on the reverse.